AN EVALUATION OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS FOR THE PREPARATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

BY

WENDELL EUGENE CANNON

B.S., University of Illinois, 1928
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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
EDUCATION IN THE GRADUATE COLLEGE OF
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Problem and procedure — This study has attempted to answer the following question: "Are the undergraduate experiences of teacher trainees at the University of Illinois adequately preparing them to meet the requirements of their future work as teachers in the secondary school?" Attention has been centered on the general education, subject matter, professional, and guidance aspects of the preparation provided; and an effort has been made to point out weaknesses or strengths in three "programs": (1) that of students in the College of Education, (2) that of students following a curriculum approved by the University Council on Teacher Education, and (3) that of other students who qualify for state certification. It has been assumed that the perfect program of teacher education has not yet been devised. Hence, the study has presented its findings not so much in the hope of creating a truly "adequate" program as with the thought that they may point the way toward some desirable changes in present practice.

During the school years 1943-47, there were 986 students who completed student teaching at the University of Illinois. Of these, 355 had received degrees from the University and were teaching in secondary schools during the 1946-47 and/or 1947-48 school years. To discover how nearly adequate had been the University experiences of these 355 teachers, they were sent a questionnaire on which they were to record their teaching objectives, problems, and practices; their opinions of the value of their University experiences, their personal and professional goals, their analyses of handicaps to their happiness or efficiency; and a survey of their personal and professional history. Two hundred eighty-four (80 per cent) returned usable questionnaires.

Simultaneously, an evaluation schedule of fifty-one items, based on teacher competencies previously defined by University faculty members as the objectives of their teacher training work, was sent the principals or other supervisors of these teachers. The fifty-one items were grouped into nine "group traits" and consolidated within the first two pages of the schedule. The principals were asked to give the teachers an over-all "general rating" without reference to any of the group traits or individual items, and a rating on each of the nine group traits. Those who could spare the time were asked to evaluate the teachers on each of the fifty-one items. In each case a five point (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) scale was used representing "poor" (lowest 10 per cent), "below average" (next

20 per cent), "average" (middle 40 per cent), "above average" (next 20 per cent), and "outstanding" (top 10 per cent) when the teachers were compared with others of equal experience. The principals returned 354 two-page reports and 246 complete schedules.

On the basis of opinion as represented in the literature of teacher education, fourteen guiding principles were then developed against which have been projected University curricula and practices.

Summary of findings — The teachers in the follow-up study proved to be greatly interested in the University's overture toward including their opinions in its planning for teacher education. As a group, they had been superior high school and college students who enjoyed teaching to a greater extent than the recent wide publicity given the meager rewards of teaching would indicate they might. The median work-week was above fifty-five hours in some fields, however, so that few teachers seemed to find the time to do some of the things contemporary educational theory would deem important — e.g., curriculum revision, inter-subject correlation, using standardized tests, unit planning, adjustment of instruction to individual differences, giving pupils an opportunity to do original research on problems vital to them or vital to the school or community. Most of the teachers taught in smaller high schools, or began their teaching there, and found themselves assigned a variety of classes and other obligations. Only a few, however, (17 per cent) thought their loads were too heavy in spite of the many duties and hours in their daily programs.

When the problems met by these teachers were listed in the order of the number of teachers finding it difficult to solve them, "adjusting instruction to individual pupils" and "getting pupils to study and work" led the list. Those reported by over half the teachers included "budgeting time and energy to meet all obligations," "using pupil freedom and initiative effectively," "inadequate building, room, or equipment," "organizing units of instruction," "making my subjects live in the lives of my pupils," and "getting pupils to be co-operative and mannerly." "Fitting into the community's idea of a teacher" and "establishing friendly relations with teachers" were numbers 25 and 29, respectively, in the list of twenty-nine problems, and hence, were hardly problems at all.

What appears to have been some degree of maladjustment on the part of the teachers is what might be characterized as a philosophical unwillingness to accept boys and girls as they are. Of the problems listed as presenting difficulty, "understanding why pupils do so poorly" was marked by 45 per cent of the respondents; "too impatient with slow pupils" was acknowledged as a personal quality by 45 per cent

and as a handicap in teaching by 20 per cent — the largest per cents of any acknowledged limitation; "if my pupils were better prepared in previous classes" was marked most often (by 50 per cent) of a list of thirty-one suggested "desired conditions" which would make them "more effective teachers" or "happier individuals"; while the bulk of teachers in all fields agreed that improved social attitudes, thought habits, and adjustment should take precedence over mastery of facts, information, and subject matter as the most important objectives of education, over 75 per cent would have failed pupils in their major teaching field if they had upheld "standards" they felt were "desirable" and over 35 per cent would have failed 10 per cent or more in one or more classes in their major field; and the strongest resentment reported (52 of the 109 teachers reporting such a school policy) against any community or school requirement was that "to pass most or all pupils."[1] Nearly one-third felt that 5 per cent or more of the pupils in one or more classes were "too dull" to do high school work.

This philosophy not only indicates a certain sort of maladjustment; it is also out of harmony with recent interpretations of the general education purposes of the secondary school and the current resolve that the school should meet the needs and capacities of all the children of all the people. In the words of the Educational Policies Commission:

> Accomplishments are measured and recorded as objectively and accurately as possible. Success and failure, however, are relative to students' abilities. A student of limited ability may carry out a plan suited to his capacities and come to the end of his school career with a merited feeling of satisfaction. This does not mean that his accomplishments will qualify him to enter professional school or to get a job as a skilled worker. It does mean, however, that he has achieved the things which he, with the aid of his counselor and teachers, set out to do. He has undertaken an educational program within his powers and has carried it through. Such an experience of success is the right of every child and youth, whether he be endowed with five talents or with one.[2]

Contrary to what might have been suspected, these teachers did not, in the main, resent the restrictions or compulsions imposed upon them by their schools or communities. While a few felt strongly opposed to restrictions against smoking or drinking, a greater number resented the P.T.A., their assignments as homeroom advisors, their assignments as class sponsors, their being asked to attend school events or required

[1] Symonds says (*op. cit.*, p. 654), "The competent teacher is emotionally stable. She is able to accept the aggression of boys and girls and their laziness, slowness, and stupidity as well as their brightness, industry and efficiency. She should be able to accept competition with her colleagues and the demands and restrictions imposed by the community."

[2] Educational Policies Commission and The American Association of School Administrators, *Education for All American Youth* (Washington: National Education Association, 1944), pp. 55-56.

to pass most or all their pupils. Somehow many of these teachers had come to feel that these were not essential parts of the teacher's work.

More than half of the teachers felt that their principals could have given them more or better orientation to their schools and supervision in their work, but few were antagonistic to their administrators. They experienced but few faculty meetings and these, they felt, were in need of improvement.

Their declared personal and professional goals characterized them as a wholesome group of young Americans who would like further education (42 per cent had already begun graduate study), were only casually interested in salary and retirement, but were most interested in travel and rearing a family. Too many, perhaps, had envious eyes on school administration and college teaching to indicate sufficient belief in the significance of their present positions. Nearly all (83 per cent) believed that their University instructors could have helped them in their first year of teaching and would have welcomed their help. Less than half, however, would encourage a son to be a teacher and even fewer, a daughter.

A majority agreed that there is need for federal aid for education, that there are economic barriers to getting a high school education, that the races should be mixed in schools, that teachers should give their opinions on controversial issues, that complete and free health services should be supplied public school pupils, and that teacher tenure and retirement plans improve public education. The majorities were small, however, and there was much inconsistency and uncertainty. They were particularly uncertain about teacher strikes and further social security legislation.

The mean of all the "general ratings" given the 355 teachers on the 5 point scale used was 3.52, a figure which indicates that school officials were well satisfied with these University trained teachers. The teachers were rated high in personal-social traits, work habits, mental-physical traits; somewhat lower in knowledge and information and in professional attitudes; and considerably lower in teaching purposes and evaluation, methods, use of teaching aids, and social attitudes. Of individual items on which they rated lowest, the first eleven dealt with problems of instruction and guidance, e.g., improving study skills, using remedial techniques, using community resources, adjusting to individual differences, discipline. When the item ratings were correlated with the general ratings, however, it appeared that the principals discriminated between good and poor teaching largely on the basis of (1) ability to "be a friend and counselor of pupils while securing their respectful cooperation with reference to the teacher, school, and community," (2)

punctuality and dependability, (3) adjustment of instruction to individual differences, (4) participation in community affairs, (5) pleasant manner, (6) industry, and (7) professional ethics. They were evidently less interested in the use of community and current problems as a point of departure for instruction. But for this latter lack of emphasis, the principals appeared to have a philosophy of education differing not greatly from that implied in the teaching competencies defined by the University instructors.

Ratings received by the teachers graduating from Council or College of Education curricula were higher than those who followed neither pattern. The Education group showed some superiority when academic majors only were considered. Those who spent all four years at the University were rated slightly higher than transfers, but the few who spent but one year at the University were the highest of all. Teachers in the upper half of their high school graduating classes received higher ratings than those who were not. Over-all University scholarships showed a direct and consistent relationship with the ratings, average in major field a less consistent relationship, and intelligence, and grade in student teaching little consistent relationship with the ratings. Teachers in the smallest schools (less than one hundred pupils) received slightly lower ratings than the other teachers.

When University curricula were examined in the light of principles pertinent to the field of general education, no one of the three programs of teacher education seemed adequate. This view was confirmed by the opinions of graduates and their principals. Some contact with the major areas of human experience was guaranteed by state certification or other requirements, but no program attempted to give the student a comprehensive, integrated, planned general education. The Council program was found to be superior to the others chiefly in that it included two courses designed to contribute to cultural and social understanding — one dealing with the history of the United States since 1828 and the other with its processes of Constitutional government. These courses, however, seemed too narrow in scope to provide the teacher with the historical perspective and one-world point of view essential as a basis for the social attitudes and understandings appropriate to the present day.

The principals' ratings indicated that most University trained teachers were adequately prepared in their fields of specialization. The Council curricula were designed to provide such a preparation, while the College of Education, by specifying no particular courses in the major or minor, offered no assurance of adequate breadth and depth of preparation in teaching fields. Neither did the general program.

Most of the Council curricula met fully the requirement that college specialization should follow the broad field divisions of high school departmental organization. The College of Education student and the general student were permitted to major and minor in such highly specialized areas as biology, physiology, economics, etc., and, accordingly, these programs violated this generally accepted principle. While each Council curriculum recommended a list of appropriate minors, few students participating in the study acted on these suggestions. They tended, instead, to choose the minor which required the fewest semester hours of work in addition to those required by the curriculum. These minors often did not meet the requirements of their teaching positions.

The ratings of principals and the reports of teachers indicated that the ability of the latter to use their relatively excellent subject matter preparation in effective teaching was often unequal to their needs and those of the pupils. The teachers' evaluations of their courses in educational psychology, methods, and student teaching, and the principles of teacher education which relate to the professional courses suggested the following possible explanations: (1) their student teaching experiences were not sufficiently varied and extensive, (2) continuity and integration among these courses were not adequate, and (3) student participation and direct learning experiences were insufficient to guarantee functional learnings in courses prior to those in methods and student teaching.

The principals' ratings indicated their general satisfaction with the scholarship, habits of study, personality, health, emotional control, and professional attitudes of the teachers trained at the University. The present practice of using scholarship as a criterion for admission to student teaching was justified by the data; however, principles relating to guidance in teacher education would demand the use of other criteria, their application at an earlier point in the student's training, a cumulative educational and personal record for each candidate, and a unified institutional guidance program. Proportionately, more students in the Council program received guidance than those in the College of Education. Especially was this true in three important areas: preparation in teaching fields, student understanding of his future role as a teacher, and the development of a personal philosophy of education. The Council program appeared to allow too little election of courses on the basis of the student's past experiences and his likely future needs, while the College of Education seemed to permit election without sufficient reference to such needs except as they might be defined by the student himself.

Recommendations — The most appropriate of the recommendations to be made in the closing section of this study is that those interested in teacher education at the University will accord the most painstaking attention to the responses of these alumni and these school officials which their extraordinary co-operation, thoroughness, and sincerity so assuredly deserve. The following additional suggestions may be given whatever consideration their intrinsic worth or the supporting data from this study may seem to merit:

1. That an over-all University program of student guidance be organized; that all pertinent University resources be integrated into this program; that the respective professional schools and colleges operate within this framework, gradually taking over a dominant role in the junior, senior, and graduate years and extending through placement and follow-up of graduates.

2. That the University reconsider the objectives relative to the general education of all its students in the light of current educational theory and the thinking of its own best minds. With reference to such objectives, there is little difference between the general college student and those preparing for teaching. The University might except that most or all its students would exemplify the attitudes and skills which are implicit in the objectives; it would then assume the obligation of limiting membership in the teaching profession to those whose behavior proved that the objectives, in their cases, had been realized.

3. That the problem of major and minor teaching fields be given further study. It seems evident that the "major" should be a broad field of study representing one of the major curriculum blocks found in the secondary schools and that the minor might be a narrower specialty, but one also paralleled by offerings in the secondary school.[3] Minors of great importance in general education and likely to be taught in high school, e.g., English and health, need special consideration. Either curricula should be so revised that many students can and will elect a sixteen semester hour minor in physical education, or, in the face of existing circumstances, a three- or four-hour survey course should be organized in physical education for men, and also for women, to give the great number who are teaching these courses without any preparation some semblance of readiness for this task. The welfare of the pupils in the secondary schools which cannot employ a physical education major demands some sort of temporary but realistic adjustment. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of reducing sub-

[3] See Potthoff, E. F., "What Combinations of Subjects Constitute the Teaching Load of Secondary School Teachers," *N.C.A. Quarterly,* Vol. 10 (October, 1935) pp. 237-44.

ject matter requirements in many curricula by reorganizing courses, or by eliminating some courses traditionally required.

4. That the College of Education accept the limits imposed by the sixteen to nineteen semester hours of professional work in the four year curricula; revise these required courses so that they include introductions to such essentials as curriculum, guidance, testing, aids, mental hygiene, etc., as have often been reserved for elective courses and seek expansion of the additional professional work, suggested by the data in this study, in a fifth year of pre-service preparation or in an internship program. The fifth year courses outlined in the Council curricula do not seem to meet the needs expressed by the teachers themselves or their employers. Perhaps additional and different preparation should be designed specifically for teachers in the junior college.

5. That the problems faced by the teachers in this study should serve as a focus of attention in certain phases of professional education courses, and, perhaps, in some other courses as well. Since teachers list "discipline" as a major concern, and since principals use this factor as the first order criterion of teaching success, it cannot be dismissed as a problem by saying that it does not exist or that the young teacher should seek to cure causes and not symptoms. An interim technique to be used during the search must be taught and mastered through practice. Similarly, young teachers must be better prepared, philosophically and technically, to adjust instruction to individual differences.

6. That duplicate or parallel curricula for the preparation of one kind of teacher in two or more colleges should be integrated into one curriculum within one college or the other. The only explanation for transfer to the College of Education from another college within the University given by any teacher (of physical education or music or art, for example) in the present study was that he could thus eliminate some requirement which the College of Education was willing to omit and, hence, could graduate earlier. It would seem of little avail for the College of Education to "reject" a student only to have him continue his preparation in another college. Such "shopping" to get the best bargain among University divisions could hardly contribute to institutional unity or student morale.

If the present Council curricula, all of which qualify the student for graduation from some other college, were approved without any reservation by the College of Education, there would be no discernible reason for students in these curricula to register in that College, and it would automatically cease to exist except for the two specialized four-year curricula it now contains and for its function as a division of the Graduate College. Faced with this dilemma, some universities

have arranged a scheme of dual registration, with the College of Education taking increased responsibility for guidance and direction after the sequence of professional courses is under way.[4]

Another solution, more consistent with the professional purposes for which the College of Education was created, would be for the College to exercise more vigorous leadership in the realm of the University's teacher training function. Nonteacher education curricula exist in all of the other divisions of the University which train teachers except the School of Physical Education. The preliminary report of the 1948 Bowling Green Conference, sponsored by the N.E.A. National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards states:

> Every individual preparing to enter the teaching profession should have the privilege and benefit of enrolling in an institution or institutional unit which devotes its entire energy to teacher education. The counseling and guidance of all students, the development of professional attitudes and understandings, the building of programs for teacher education, and all other matters should be carried out by a college, a division, or department of education. The unit, regardless of its designation, should work with other departments and/or divisions in making certain that the prospective teacher is thoroughly prepared in the subject matter fields of his choice.[5]

Whatever arrangement is made, President Holmes' plea to Colleges of Education "not to worship their own gods without admitting their colleagues of other faculties into their congregation,"[6] will need to be heeded. The subject matter specialists, it is to be hoped, would also acquaint themselves with the nature of the secondary school into which some of their students will go as teachers, realize the tremendous task faced by those trying to instruct in the realm of professional competencies, be willing to make a contribution toward that task, and occasionally recall that they, too, have a stake in teaching as a profession and as a force toward social integration.

When the "School of Education" was created in 1907, it was so arranged that its students remained registered in the various other colleges, but reported to the Director of the School of Education and his "faculty" for educational guidance and counsel regarding certification and placement. The structure bears striking similarity to the present Council on Teacher Education. The College of Education was created in 1918 with a separate faculty, budget, and student body. It

[4] Syracuse, and Washington State among others. See Syracuse University, *A Functional Program of Teacher Education* (Washington: American Council on Education, 1941), p. 259.

[5] Preliminary report of Group 1, Organization and Administration of the Teacher Education Institution.

[6] Holmes, H. W., "Shall Teachers Be Scholars?" Lecture, presented before Institute for Administrative Officers of Higher Institutions, University of Chicago, July, 1937.

was to be a professional unit in which would be concentrated the University's function as a training institution for teachers. How to reorganize the work of teacher education so that neither the splendid work of the Council in bringing about co-operation among departments nor the professional values inherent in a College of Education will be disregarded is one of the problems to be solved.

7. That, for those planning to teach, preparation in a foreign language should be removed as a requirement for admission to the University, and that it should likewise be discontinued as a condition of graduation from any teacher training program. The first part of this recommendation finds ample support in the eight-year study of the Progressive Education Association (now American Education Fellowship);[7] Baker reviews so much evidence that he states this recommendation as a principle of teacher education and generalizes it to include all specific high school courses, language or otherwise.[8]

The second part would appear to be a corollary of the first since the proficiency usually gained by two years' study of a foreign language could rarely qualify it as a "humanity" and, hence, it could hardly be justified on the grounds on which it is usually defended. If the University is willing to graduate music teachers without a foreign language, there would seem to be no basis upon which it should require languages for teachers of science, mathematics, or social studies. A better case for its requirement might be made in the field of English. If the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences should desire to retain the foreign language requirement for graduation, it might announce that it is co-operating with the College of Education by admitting students without foreign language (if they are in the upper half scholastically of their high school graduating classes) and will not insist on their taking a language in the freshman or sophomore years if they intend to transfer to the College of Education as juniors. The alternative would be to set up the four-year teacher training curricula in the "academic" fields within the College of Education, arranging for College of Education students to secure a liberal arts degree by taking the necessary extra work and the College of Liberal Arts students to earn a B.S. in Education by a reciprocal arrangement.

Elimination of the language requirement would not imply that such work is not valuable, but it would release time for further general education which seems far more necessary. Students who desire to major or minor in a foreign language would not be affected by such a change.

[7] Aikin, W. M., *The Story of the Eight-Year Study* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1942).

[8] Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

8. That an effort should be made to lead all professional groups and the general public toward a common understanding of the role of the school, the role of the teacher, and the problems of recruitment, selection, retention, placement, etc. If the public schools can be made to play a more significant role in teacher education through student teaching, internship, follow-up, and in-service training, and the University can become more conscious of the public school and its problems through the same avenues, such common understandings might be reached more easily. The needs for a higher teacher-pupil ratio in general and for a more gradual induction into the first year of public school service may be mentioned in this connection.

9. That the attempt to revise the curricula for teacher education should not be limited in scope to the consideration of existing University courses if new, perhaps cross-departmental, courses would meet objectives more adequately. Such courses continue to be held in low esteem at the University. While several Council curricula list optional Division of General Studies broadfield courses, an examination of transcripts indicated that only five teachers of the 355 included in this study had been guided into such courses.[9] Eight others had registered in the General Division as freshmen, and, hence, had taken some of these courses prior to transferring to teacher training curricula. An alternative to a four-year College of Education or a two-year college receiving students from the College of Liberal Arts might be found in a two-year program of general education, planned with the support of the entire University and organized through an expanded General Division which would then send students into the College of Education or other Colleges.

10. That the University should give continuing attention to its function of training teachers for the public school system of which it is an integral part. The movement toward making these schools meet the needs of all the people the University should not delay by insisting on a certain curriculum pattern for the debatable benefit of the few who will come to the University. Indeed, it should assist the schools in this connection by turning its attention to the kind of teacher needed in that kind of school, and the variety of University experiences which will tend to produce that kind of teacher. Whatever selective devices it must impose to pick those deserving of the kinds of collegiate education which the state will provide can then be administered on its own responsibility and without penalizing the welfare of the bulk of secondary school pupils.

[9] Two of these were in art, two in music, one in English.

Education for All American Youth includes the following quotation from the "history that must not be written":

> The history of education, like that of all other social services, is punctuated by the ruins of institutions that would not or could not adapt to new and urgent needs. It now appears almost certain that the locally administered high school, for so many years the center of the American dream of equal opportunity through education, has joined the Latin grammar school of the seventeenth century and the academy of the nineteenth in the great wastebasket of history.[10]

If such a history is not to be written, the high school teacher of the immediate future must see himself as something more than a dispenser of knowledge. It would be unfortunate indeed if it should become necessary to create new public institutions which are willing to direct their efforts toward the preparation of such teachers. It would be especially unfortunate since the resources of a great university seem so precisely designed to serve such a function if it but chooses to do so.

[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 9-10.

VITA

Wendell Eugene Cannon was born in Tower Hill, Illinois, on April 21, 1905. He attended the public schools there and was graduated from the Tower Hill Community High School in 1924. He was enrolled in the Eastern Illinois State Teachers College, Charleston, Illinois from 1924 to 1926, and in the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois from 1926 to 1928, receiving the B.S. degree in June, 1928. He attended the University of Illinois Summer Sessions in 1929, 1930, and 1931, receiving the M.S. degree in October, 1931.

From 1928 to 1939 he was a teacher in the Lovington, Hoopeston, Pekin, and Highland Park, Illinois, high schools for one, two, four, and four years, respectively. During the years 1939 to 1942 he held the position of instructor in Education and Coordinator of Student Teaching at the University of Illinois, and from 1942 to 1948 of Director of Teacher Training and Placement at the Whitewater, Wisconsin, State Teachers College. As of September, 1948, he was appointed Associate Professor of Education and Director of Teacher Education at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

He is a member of Phi Delta Kappa and Kappa Delta Pi.